“I’M GOING TO GET ONLINE AND I’M GOING TO TALK TO PEOPLE AND LEARN ENGLISH”

THE INFORMAL LANGUAGE LEARNING OF A SHERLOCK FAN

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Extramural English

“…English-related activities that learners come in contact with or are engaged in outside the walls of the English classroom, generally on a voluntary basis.”

(Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2014, p. 4)
Online Fandom

“the local and international networks of fans that develop around a particular program, text or other media product and which foster the sharing of responses to the source material, including the production of novel fan-generated content.” (Sauro, 2014, p. 239)
Fanfiction Research in Applied Linguistics

- Teen L2 learners’ use of fanfiction in anime fandoms to transition from novice writers in English to successful writers (Black, 2006; 2009)
- Bilingual fanfiction writing practices of young Finnish fans of American television shows to index multilingualism and global citizenship (Lepännen, et al, 2009)
- Youth writing of self-insert fanfiction to confront and examine social issues in their local context (Lepännen, 2008)
Other Fan Practices

- Fan site web design and the development of textual identity (Lam, 2000).
- Anime consumption and Japanese learning (Fukunaga, 2006).
- Amateur translations (scanlation) of Asian manga into Spanish (Valero-Porras & Cassany, 2015).
- Critiquing and restorying all white texts by racebending the characters in fanart (Thomas & Stornaiuolo, 2016).
Purpose

To explore the informal L2 language learning and digital literacy development of a Sherlock fan.
Steevee’s Fan History

2009
• Joined Supernatural Fandom
• Joined Twitter; Created a fan FB page

2010
• Joined Torchwood and Doctor Who fandoms
• Created a fan Tumblr

2012
• Joined Sherlock fandom
• First read fanfiction
• Wrote first fanfiction

2013
• Began reporting on filming of Sherlock #setlock
• Developed fact-checking skills, brevity & speed in English for posting.

2015
• Joined The Man from Uncle fandom
“As we have noted, motivation is never simply in the hands of the motivated individual learner but is constructed and constrained through social relations with others”

(Ushioda, 2008, p. 157)
I tried to shift my accent from American English to British English. I tried to learn to write colour with ‘ou’ and so on. And I started to watch Doctor Who and Torchwood. Those were my next two big fandoms.

(Interview, 14 December 2015)

…it was the opportunity to completely immerse myself in the English language. That was it for me. I was so stoked. I’m going to get online and I’m going to talk to people and learn English. And I’m going to learn new words. And I used to sit there with a notepad next to Twitter and write down words I’d never seen before, look them up, learn them.

(Interview, 14 December 2015)
Spoiling

“...the purposeful discovery of crucial developments in the plot of a fictional story of a film or TV series before the relevant material has been broadcast or released.”

(Duffett, 2013, p. 168)
“The non-native speakers are really the lose canon because they might understand something incorrectly because of their own lack of knowledge of the English language or sarcasm or whatever is being used as a metaphor for example.”

(Interview, 14 December 2015)
Due to the massive increase of hits and followers due to setlock, I somehow became someone who was consulted on various things and I realized that if I wanted to help/give answers etc, I’d have to make myself understood in the way I wanted to be – that’s when my answers got longer and more in-depth, as I wanted to make sure my arse was covered XD

(Email, 7 January 2016)
Affordances

“text-making practices are not determined by what the resources naturally offer but are shaped by how people perceive what various representational resources can or cannot do for them” (Lee, 2007, p. 227)
“Many young people today consider what exists on the Internet freely available raw material to be used however they see fit. Moreover, tools for copying and modifying this raw material are simple and abundant. What is distinctive about the digital environment is not borrowing per say … but rather the sense that borrowing does not require an acknowledgement.”

(Chun, Kern & Smith, 2016, p. 69)
That was the first thing I learned on Twitter, basically. How not to steal anybody’s tweet because I got yelled at for copying and pasting because that’s what I knew.

(Interview, 14 December 2015)

I had no idea what Tumblr was about until I got yelled at…And from then on I knew, you give credit. You reblog. You can tag some things. So somebody took me by the hand, and I’ve taken hundreds of people by the hand over the years, letting them into the fandom on Tumblr, so to speak. Don’t steal anybody’s art.

(Interview, 14 December 2015)
Twenty-first century skills include critical thinking, information literacy, global citizenship.

(Suto, 2013)
And setlock has taught me in a way to check many things that come up. Like today, it was the Pope posted his first selfie…Within one minute I had found out, even before Buzzfeed had found out, I knew that the picture was not a selfie but a screengrab from an interview he once did.

(Interview, 14 December 2015)
I know I have those tools because of fandom. To think differently. To think critically. Especially to try to see it from a different point of view. And fandom has provided me with so many tools regarding my own everyday life and also accepting the other lives around me as part of the whole.

(Interview, 14 December 2015)
1. Experience working with clients from multiple countries
2. Social media savvy
3. Internet research skills
4. Native writing skills in both German and English.

(Job Announcement, 20 June 2016)
References


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